

England. — Churches, &c. — Baptists. — Midland Association

The Elders, and Messengers of the several Baptist Churches at Aulcester, Bewdley, Bengeworth, Birmingham, Bourton and Stow, Bridgenorth, Bromsgrove, Hooknorton, Leominster, Pershore, Upton, Tewkesbury, Warwick, and Worcester, met in Association at Bengeworth, maintaining the great Doctrines of *Three equal Persons in the Godhead; Eternal, and Personal Election; The Original Guilt, and Depravity of Mankind; Particular Redemption; Free Justification by the imputed Righteousness of Christ; Efficacious Grace in Regeneration; and, The final Perseverance of the Saints.*

O the respective Churches represented by them, with Grace, Mercy, and Peace from God, the FATHER, and from our LORD JESUS
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Dear and honor'd Brethren,

Members of civil Society, give us Leave, on this public Occasion, to address you of that most kind, and signal Providence, which has of late so distinguished our Land. While many other Nations are visited with calamities of War, exhausted, depopulated, and almost turn'd into a Desert, our Country smiles in Peace, and remarkable Plenty within all her Borders. GOD, by an awful and sudden Stroke! hath remov'd our late venerable Arch, who was, for many Years, a Blessing to these Realms; yet it hath enabled Him to alleviate our Sorrow, and repair that Loss in the Person of our present august Sovereign; under whose Government we have a pleasing prospect, that we shall enjoy our many Privileges, and transmit them undiminished to our Posterity. And, tho' another important, and well dispos'd Branch of the Legislature, has been in Course dissolv'd; yet, from the Measures that have been made in the several Parts of the Country, we have Reason to hope, that the future Parliament will be no less patriot, and well dispos'd than the past. To these Things, we may add the many Successes with which it hath pleased GOD to distinguish our Arms, and those of our Allies in the Prosecution of the present War; by which

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our late proud, and obstinate Enemies have been disappointed, and are oblig'd to court our Favor, to beg that Peace, which, not long since, they haughtily rejected: That Peace, which we have long desir'd as a Blessing from God, and which, we hope, will soon be concluded in a Manner honorable to Him, and profitable to us.———*These Things*, Dear Brethren, call for special Acknowledgements, for the most zealous Returns of Gratitude and Praise!—But, alas! As the Ministers of CHRIST and the Messengers of the Churches, we are sorry to tell you, that while our temporal and civil Concernments are so prosperous, our spiritual and religious Affairs seem to be greatly on the Decline: The Accounts we have from the several Churches too sensibly confirm the melancholy Truth. Death, that insatiate Destroyer of Mankind, hath made more Places empty by many, the past Year than are yet fill'd with real Converts to God. Zion mourns, and is desolate, let her groans reach our Ears, and affect our Hearts!———Many of our Desires, indeed, are express'd by the Churches we represent, Desires after more of the Life of God in the Soul: But, alas! We fear these Desires are scarcely worthy of the Name: Were they genuine and ardent, the Blessing desir'd wou'd be half enjoy'd. To stir up the languid Flame of a faint Desire, give us Leave to address you, with a warmth and Solemnity suited to the Importance of the Subject, and recommend to you some of the most animating Truths, and necessary Duties of our holy Religion.

CONSIDER the distinguishing Grace of God, so gloriously display'd in the Gospel of His SON. The early Choice He made of you to be His People. How the Thoughts of His Heart to you were Love, even while you yet continued in Enmity, and Rebellion against Him: Call to mind how the Love of God was magnified in the Gift of His own Son to become incarnate, to suffer, and die in the Flesh for your Souls: How the Word of His Grace and the all-awakening Voice of His Spirit, reach'd your Hearts, and call'd you out of Darkness into His marvellous Light: Rescu'd your Souls from the Power of Sin, the Slavery of the Devil, and brought you into joyful Liberty of the Sons of God: That being redeem'd, and brought nigh by the Blood of CHRIST, you are no longer Strangers and Foreigners, but fellow Citizens with the Saints, and of the Household of God: Deliver'd from the Power, and the Fear of Death, you may rejoice in Hope of eternal Life, which a God, Who cannot lie, hath promis'd to you in CHRIST JESUS: That you have a great and glorious high Priest, Who is enter'd into the

the Presence of God *for you*, and there *lives for ever*, and because *He* lives you *shall live also* ! O the amazing Privileges ! O the blessed Hope of a Christian ! Having, Dear Brethren, this Hope in you, *purifie yourselves even as your God is pure* ; i. e. attend to those Means which God hath graciously appointed you for that Purpose : or, in other Words, *fill up the great, the comfortable Duties*, of the *Christian Profession*.

IF you value the *Peace*, the *Life* of your Souls, attend to the *Ordinances* of God. You have a *Name*, and a *Place* in *His House*, value it, and never suffer *that Place* to be empty. *Devote the Sabbath*, the *whole* of the Sabbath to the service of God. Say, *in the Morning*, O LORD, thou shalt hear my Voice in *Tby Sanctuary*, and *in the Evening* I will not be silent *there*.

LET *Prayer*, one of the most extensive and important Duties of a Christian, let *Prayer in all its Branches* be your *constant* Imploy. Shall those who have *immortal Souls* capable of holding *Converse with God*, and who have a *God ever ready* to converse with them, neglect that great, that most delightful Intercourse, and be *Strangers to their Closets*, and *their God* ?

SHALL *the Masters of Families*, who have the Care perhaps of many Souls committed to them, who have not only Servants, but *Children too*, who are dear to them as their own Souls, shall *those*, whom God hath appointed as *Priests* in their own Houses, neglect the Duties of that *sacred Appointment* ? God forbid, but that they shou'd erect an Altar to the Honor of *His Name*, and offer up *Morning and Evening Sacrifice* upon it, holy, and acceptable to God, thro' CHRIST, the great high Priest of our Profession.

AND here, dear Brethren, we must not forget to charge you, that in all these most solemn Transactions, you content not yourselves, with the *external Form*, without the *internal Life*, and Power of Godliness. O let not your *Attendance* in the House of God, let not your *Addresses* to the Throne of God *degenerate into Formality*. Remember, that tho' Man may look to the *outside Appearance*, God ever looketh to the *Heart*. Be not therefore contented till you find *your Hearts engaged with God*.

TAKE heed, that you do not suffer a *wordly, carnal Spirit* to draw off your Attention from the *infinite Concerns of Eternity*. Tho' you ought to take a prudent Care for the things of *this Life*, yet suffer them not, by any Means, to come into Competition with the more *exalted Enjoyments of the Life to come*. As you Name the Name of CHRIST, you depart from Iniquity, let
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not this suffice you: Convince the World that you have been *with* JESUS and let your whole Conversation on Earth favour so much of Heaven, that others may be led by your Example to glorify God.

AND now, what shall we say more, but in the most *affectionate* Manner commend you to God, *Who* is able to keep you from falling; and to the *Word*, the *rich* Word of His Grace, which is profitable for Reproof, for Correction, for Comfort, for Instruction in Righteousness that you may be perfect thoroughly furnish'd to every good Work; *looking to* JESUS the Author, and finisher of your Faith and Course.

THIS, we trust, shall be the *constant*, the *servent* Prayer of those, who think it an Honor to serve you, and to subscribe ourselves

Your Brethren in

Bengeworth, May 13th, 1761.

CHRIST JESUS.

Benj. Beddome, Moderator

Minutes of the Association.

ON Tuesday Evening the Messengers being met, some Time was improv'd in Prayer, the Letters from the Churches read, their Contents minutely consider'd, Minutes taken for the circular Letter, and Bro. A. desir'd to draw it up.

THE public Meeting on Wednesday was open'd by our Bro. France and Bro. Ash follow'd in Prayer, Bro. Thomas preach'd from Eph. 3—Bro. Jones pray'd, Bro. Turner, preach'd from 2. Cor. 12—14—and Bro. Beddome concluded in Prayer. The same Evening the circular Letter was read and approv'd, and Prayer concluded the whole Solemnity.

IN all the Churches, which constitute our Association, there are 50 Members. 17 have been remov'd by Death the past Year, and 10 have been added by Baptism.

THE next Association to be at *Warwick*, to meet on Tuesday in the Whitsun Week at the *Marlborough's Head*. Messrs. Overbury and Jones preach; in Case of Failure, Bro. M. Gowan to supply the Place of either.



